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Ways to promote effective structured and sustainable youth participation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 68/130. It provides a compilation of recent initiatives and activities related to the development and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels, based on input from Member States, United Nations entities and civil society youth organizations.

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I. Introduction

1. On 18 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/130 on policies and programmes involving youth, in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventieth session on the implementation of the resolution, "including on ways to promote effective, structured and sustainable youth participation in designing, implementing and assessing United Nations youth policies, programmes and initiatives, to be prepared in consultation with Member States as well as the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system, and also encourages the Secretariat to consult, as appropriate, with youth-led and youth-focused organizations". Further to that request, the Secretariat consulted with relevant entities and received responses from 19 Member States,[1] 18 United Nations entities[2] and 4 youth-led structures.[3]

2. Section II of the report highlights activities in the development of policies and programmes for youth and efforts towards their monitoring and evaluation. It presents an overview of efforts and mechanisms to promote youth participation, including in the design, implementation and assessment of United Nations youth policies, programmes and initiatives, as well as via the involvement of youth and youth-led organizations in decision-making, and through participation in Member State delegations. Sections III through IX present activities and initiatives undertaken to enhance the situation of youth in the following areas: education, employment, health, violence and conflict, discrimination and gender equality, youth participation and intergenerational relations.

3. Section X sets out the recommendations of Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations on how to more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth, including through enhancing efforts to ensure effective and meaningful youth participation.

II. Development of policies and programmes for youth

4. Increased efforts to develop, implement and measure holistic policies and programmes for youth have been undertaken by Member States and United Nations

[1] Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Finland, Honduras, Italy, Malawi, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Singapore, Switzerland, Togo and the United States of America.

[2] United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

[3] European Youth Forum, International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, Major Group for Children and Youth and World Alliance of YMCAs.

entities in recent years. In particular, a focus on education and employment has been central to the development of youth and youth-related policies in Member States. Efforts to ensure the monitoring and evaluation of youth policies are also reflective of work by the United Nations to develop a proposed set of indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth (E/CN.5/2013/8), so as to support its implementation. The present section provides an overview of the efforts of Member States, the United Nations and youth civil society to ensure the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of youth policies at the local, national, regional and international levels.

5. The development of holistic and integrated policies for youth is a priority for Member States, allowing them to target the specific needs and challenges of youth while ensuring young people's participation in the development, implementation and review of such policies. A number of Member States have developed or are in the process of developing a specific national youth policy (Angola, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Colombia, Finland, Madagascar, Malawi, Peru, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Where a national youth policy is not in place, Member States have developed sectoral youth-related policies at the local, federal and national levels and/or ensured inclusion of youth priorities in other policy frameworks (China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Italy, United States of America).

6. As highlighted throughout the report, youth policy remains a priority for United Nations entities, with many providing technical assistance and support to governments in the development and revision of national youth policies, through country, regional and global offices, including on policies to address youth unemployment and underemployment. In addition, accelerated attention has been placed on youth via the development and implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP). In 2014, the United Nations released its first report[4] on the development of the Youth-SWAP, while throughout 2014 and 2015 activities to support the implementation at the country, regional and international levels were undertaken. Efforts to ensure the monitoring and evaluation of the Youth-SWAP are being led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in its capacity as permanent co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development along with the 2014/2015 co-chair, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the 2015/2016 co-chair, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, United Nations entities have utilized momentum under the Youth-SWAP to develop or enhance entity-specific youth strategies aimed at better including youth in their processes and activities. These include the UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) corporate youth strategy and the FAO strategic framework on rural youth.

7. As part of its "Making Commitments Matter: a toolkit for young people to evaluate national youth policy" youth-policies strategy, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in partnership with UNESCO, UNDP, the

[4] United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth Report 2014. Available from http://unyouthswap.org/system/refinery/resources/2014/10/15/20_42_35_106_UN_Youth_SWAP_Report_2014.pdf.

International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Commonwealth Secretariat and regional institutions, is conducting regional workshops on the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies, and is producing an updated toolkit on youth-related policies.

8. Under its Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021, UNESCO has been supporting the development and review of national youth policies in Africa, the Arab States and Asia, applying a participatory and inclusive approach that actively engages youth organizations in constructive dialogue with policymakers. Also, the Networks of Mediterranean Youth, the UNESCO flagship project funded by the European Union, is currently building the capacities of youth organizations to design and apply creative methods for the implementation of the different components of a national youth policy (Lebanon and Morocco). In addition, UNESCO is providing technical assistance and youth-sensitive policy advice for other sectorial public policies that impact young women and men, within its fields of competence.

9. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has carried out situational analysis research and expert group meetings on youth in the Asia-Pacific region, providing recommendations and technical support on how to develop and implement more inclusive and sustainable youth policies. In Eastern and Southern Africa, collaboration between United Nations partners (the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNESCO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO)), the African Union, regional economic commissions (Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC)), and civil society organizations aims at strengthening commitment and inter-agency coordination and creating stronger synergies between policies and programmes at all levels to ensure systematic investment in young people's development.

Events on youth policies

10. Events to encourage the accelerated development and implementation of youth policies were convened, such as the first Global Forum on Youth Policies, hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan with the support of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, UNESCO, UNDP and the Council of Europe (October 2014) and the High-level Event of the General Assembly marking the twentieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (May 2015), organized by the Office of the President of the General Assembly with the support of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and members of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

Monitoring and evaluation of youth policies

11. Member States have undertaken efforts to establish their own mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of implementation of youth policies (Cambodia, Mexico) including through indicators for the assessment of youth development at local and national levels (Colombia), and via the collection and information sharing of data pertaining to youth policies (Switzerland). Likewise, United Nations entities

have bolstered efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth through the collection of data (the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)). Sixty-seven States members of ITU have begun reporting disaggregated information and communications technology (ICT) data by age and gender, while via its participatory slum upgrading programme UN-Habitat collects and analyses disaggregated data on hunger and poverty while also developing activities and monitoring tools. Further, through its City Prosperity Index, UN-Habitat is working with the Government of Saudi Arabia to develop a set of indicators related to youth engagement in governance and the socioeconomic life of youth, which will be later rolled out in Colombia.

12. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, ECLAC collects data on the situation of young people and on the opportunities available to them in several priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, while UNDP supported the development of the first Ibero-American Youth Survey with the Ibero-American Youth Organization and national youth institutes. In the Caribbean, the UNDP Office for Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) supported the development of a monitoring and evaluation plan to inform the activities of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Youth Development Action Plan, while in the Asia-Pacific region, UNDP partnered with the Asian Barometer Survey to increase understanding on the level of youth participation in democratic and political processes in the region. In Eastern and Southern Africa, UNFPA commissioned the University of Pretoria to undertake a regional review of national laws and policies related to access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

13. Youth-led organizations pointed to their active involvement in informing discussions and development of youth policies (the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, the European Youth Forum, the Major Group for Children and Youth), both pertaining to their own work and working with United Nations entities and Member States in their elaboration.

III. Education

14. Together with scaling up efforts to ensure that young people have access to formal education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, Member States have increasingly recognized the complementarity of non-formal education in ensuring young people's full and lifelong education. Incorporating aspects of non-formal learning into the formal education curricula, enhancing access to education, focusing on vocational and technical training and skills development, as well as working to ease the school-to-work transition and skills gap, are priority areas of work for Member States, the United Nations and youth-led organizations.

15. Efforts have been undertaken by several Member States to provide young people access to both formal and non-formal education. Cambodia works with UNESCO to promote non-formal education services, including in ICT, and promotes voluntary activities enabling young people to acquire relevant skills for employability and entrepreneurial development. Malawi conducted a literacy and numeracy programme aimed at educating young people who have dropped out of the formal education system, while Italy promotes civic education, volunteering and

youth mobility through its Youth Camps project and the National Civic Service. Colombia has undertaken efforts to increase enrolment and completion of primary and secondary-level education through its "Todos a Apprender" and "Ser Pilo Paga" programmes, with a focus on education and labour market transition. The Government of Swaziland ratified the Education for All agenda with a goal of attaining universal primary education by 2015, while it also runs the Sebenta National Institute, which provides education, literacy and skills in a non-formal setting.

16. Programmes to enhance the skills of young people in ICT have been developed in some Member States (Cambodia, Italy, Peru, United States of America), including the ConnectED initiative in the United States, which aims to strengthen the linkages between education and ICT. In Peru, ICT-focused programmes promote technical education with specific links to regional and local economic opportunities, while the National Program of Scholarships and Education Loans targets vocational and technical careers in higher level institutions.

17. United Nations entities have undertaken efforts to promote the education of young people in all spheres. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, ECLAC organized a regional seminar for secondary education in 2014; supported work in publishing an online observatory of inclusive education in the Latin American region; and published the "Literacy among youth and adult women in Latin America and the Caribbean: an analysis of the main programs". The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) works to facilitate young girls in accessing educational facilities and on creating safe and violence-free school environments (China). Additionally, UN-Women provides vocational training to out of school girls and young women as a means of providing them with opportunities for their economic empowerment (Pakistan and South Sudan). FAO has developed the global education and advocacy initiative Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger to introduce young people to the issues of hunger, malnutrition and food security, while it also works to assist governments in the inclusion and design of youth-friendly and climate-smart methodologies for vocational and professional education. UN-Habitat has launched the Innovate Kenya programme, which promotes ICT and entrepreneurship training in the slums and informal settlements of Nairobi.

Education for sustainability

18. Ensuring a strong link between education and the environment is a priority. UNEP promotes environmental education within formal and non-formal education systems through its Greening Universities Toolkit: Transforming Universities into Green and Sustainable Campuses and is supporting the design and implementation of pilot projects in Chile, Indonesia and the United Republic of Tanzania on the institutional strengthening of education for sustainable consumption. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is a co-sponsor of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, along with the United Nations University (UNU), UNESCO, UNEP and the United Nations Global Compact/the Principles for Responsible Management Education, a partnership that brings together 272 universities across the world which have committed to provide primarily young people with instruction in sustainability, to conduct and promote research on sustainable development, to reach out to their communities to promote sustainability, and to share their knowledge on sustainability through networks.

IV. Employment

Addressing the high rates of youth unemployment, underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal employment

19. Countries have developed targeted actions or strategies to combat youth unemployment (Algeria, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, France, Ghana, Honduras, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, United States of America). Programmes and policies aimed at increasing youth's vocational and technical skills have been implemented in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Malawi, Peru, Switzerland and Togo, in some cases through the development of training and innovation programmes (Bahrain, China, Colombia), while the United States implements numerous skills development programmes targeting at-risk youth. In recognition of the increased attention to the importance of equipping young people with the skills needed to meet the demands of the labour market, the General Assembly in 2014 adopted a resolution designating a World Youth Skills Day to be commemorated on 15 July each year (resolution 69/145).

20. The promotion of entrepreneurship, including via training, improved access to credit and financial literacy, was highlighted as a means of promoting full employment (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Ghana, Honduras, Italy, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Peru, Switzerland, Togo). At the same time, developing multi-stakeholder programmes and partnerships between the public and private sector has also been used as a means of stimulating youth employment (Colombia, Italy, Malawi, Switzerland). Ensuring a focus on rural youth, including via the development of youth agricultural employment policies and programmes, was also noted (Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Mauritania, Togo). To this end a number of United Nations entities are working with Member States to develop youth-friendly financial services and increase young people's access to finance and improve literacy. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has worked with 10 financial service providers across 8 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to develop, pilot and roll out youth-focused financial products, especially savings, and non-financial services such as financial literacy for youth aged 12 to 24. UNCDF leveraged its expertise by contributing to the development of a joint United Nations initiative in Senegal and in Rwanda to address the challenge of youth employment and advocated for a market-led solution to access to finance for youth. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat's Urban Youth Fund provides funding to youth-led organizations for entrepreneurial focused projects, enabling their access to finance, while it works to improve youth employability and skills development through its participatory slum-upgrading policies and initiatives. UN-Women partners with governments and civil society for provision of skill-based training and livelihood support to girls and young women, and engages with young men and students in developing innovative gender-sensitive programmes and technologies aimed at promoting the economic empowerment of girls and young women.

Regional considerations

African region

21. Africa is experiencing positive economic growth, yet progress is slow in the creation of productive employment and decent work, with youth underemployment a particular challenge for the region. To better address the issue, a number of countries have developed national youth employment policies and action plans, including Tunisia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In 2015, ILO supported the initiative to make the Youth-SWAP an integral part of the work on youth employment of the United Nations in Zambia.

22. In Africa, the Economic Community of West African States is implementing a regional action plan for youth, while Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia are building entrepreneurial capacities for young men and women, along with facilitating their access to labour market information and career guidance. In Egypt, public employment services have improved their ability to provide career education, counselling and job placement for youth, while a national youth employment initiative was launched in Malawi in 2013. Comoros is implementing a programme of apprenticeships, entrepreneurial training and labour market mediation services. Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya are improving the provision of technical and vocational skills training and have adopted labour-intensive technologies in infrastructure investments.

23. Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and Zimbabwe have developed new vocational training for rural youth, while Uganda is supporting efforts by young people to establish small and medium enterprises. In Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, entrepreneurship promotion, business start-up and management skills and access to finance for young entrepreneurs have been expanded. Burundi and South Sudan have developed similar interventions to support returnee refugees, displaced persons and ex-combatants. Togo, through its National Volunteerism Promotion Programme, places emphasis on the importance of youth volunteerism in the development of experience and skills which contribute to young people's economic development, while also carrying out programmes to promote the employment of young artists and entrepreneurship of rural youth.

24. In the Eastern and South African region, UN-Women launched the Young Innovators Award to incentivize local youth to develop gender-sensitive technologies in the agricultural sector. Similarly in Rwanda, UN-Women contributed to the Joint Flagship Programme on Value Chain Development that aimed to formalize the informal private sector with a special focus on women and youth. The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), through collaboration on youth volunteer programmes with governments and United Nations entities at the country level, has reported that 66 per cent and 44 per cent of young people were able to find decent work owing to their voluntary experiences in Burkina Faso and Togo, respectively.

Latin American and Caribbean region

25. Various countries in the region have increased support for programmes promoting youth employment, such as "Jóvenes con más y mejor trabajo" in Argentina, "Empléate" in Costa Rica and "Jóvenes a la obra" in Peru. Legislation was passed in Uruguay, and progress was made in policy development concerning

decent work for youth in Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador and Paraguay. Alongside these policies, job placement systems focused on youth have been developed, vocational training programmes have been strengthened and targeted surveys have been conducted to gather relevant information on the school-to-work transition in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Jamaica and Peru. Colombia focuses on the talent and innovation of young people in producing digital content via the establishment of 17 ViveLabs, which have helped Colombia to generate the largest network of entrepreneurs in the region.

26. The work of ILO on youth employment in the Latin American and Caribbean region has a strong emphasis on the transition from informal to formal employment. ILO held a tripartite regional meeting (April 2015) on "What works for youth employment and transition to formality" that highlighted a number of suggestions for duplication and upscaling. ECLAC is currently involved in two projects in the region: a joint development account project with ESCAP to support selected Latin American and Asian countries in their efforts to strengthen their national training systems in order to promote the productive integration, especially of youth, into the labour market; and a study on the school-to-work transition among youth based on household surveys in the region.

Arab States

27. The youth unemployment crisis is part of an overall jobs problem in the Arab region, which does not generate enough decent and productive jobs for all and where young people are severely affected. Some countries in the region have improved the overall business environment, but overall performance is still lower than global averages. Education and skills outcomes of young Arabs do not compare well on a global scale and enterprises invest little in skills. In addition, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region are in emergency situations, hindering development efforts. Against this background, ILO aims to support policies and programmes conducive to the creation and improvement of jobs for youth. Within the region, the Kingdom of Bahrain, through its Youth City 2030 initiative, has developed and implemented numerous activities and programmes aimed at better facilitating youth's entry to the labour market, enhancing their leadership skills and harnessing young people's creativity and innovation through the establishment of training programmes and innovation centres, with a focus on science, technology and the arts.

Asia-Pacific region

28. Significant progress has been achieved in a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region in support of the production and use of labour statistics for evidence-based employment policymaking. Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Samoa produced their first-ever labour force survey reports, including on youth, informal employment and migration. Bangladesh is piloting quarterly labour force surveys, while Fiji is testing an annual labour market data series. Provincial labour force surveys have been piloted in the Philippines.

Europe and Central Asia

29. Youth unemployment is a priority concern in the Europe and Central Asia region. To address this concern, ILO has contributed to the development of action

plans on youth employment in several countries, most recently in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia through the provision of technical assistance and the establishment of a national tripartite working group. In the last few years, ILO has increased its technical support on youth employment-related issues in the Western European region, including via the development of the European Youth Guarantee Schemes, such as that implemented in Finland, which guarantees that every young person under age 25 and every recent graduate under age 30 will be offered a job, work trial, study placement or rehabilitation within three months of registering as unemployed. Meanwhile, in Italy a package of measures entitled "Diritto al futuro" (Right to the Future) has been set up to tackle the high youth unemployment situation, including through the provision of funds and access to credit for young people. Switzerland, though having a low youth unemployment rate, standing at roughly 3 per cent, places attention on ensuring quality education so as to ease the school-to-work transition for young people.

30. The ILO "Partnerships for youth employment in the Commonwealth of Independent States" project (funded by Lukoil) supports institutions and other actors in the identification of effective responses to tackle the youth employment crisis, including through cooperation and partnerships at regional, national and subnational levels. The initiative established a regional network of experts and practitioners that promotes cooperation and development of knowledge on youth employment and facilitates capacity-building of constituents. Members of the network, after relevant training, are currently pioneering a voluntary peer review mechanism (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the Russian Federation) and, by applying this tool, strengthening capacities of national policymakers (governments as well as social partners) to analyse the youth labour market and design and evaluate employment policies and strategies for youth.

31. Ensuring digital skills development is central to addressing youth employment concerns. ITU has continued to encourage policymakers to ensure that youth in their countries are included in the growing number of job and business opportunities by incorporating digital skills development in the school curriculum and supporting innovation hubs, contests, mobile app labs, hackathons and co-working space.

32. UNEP, in its work on promoting a transition towards an inclusive green economy, recognizes the importance of education and training of youth, and has worked within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) roll-out countries to promote green and decent jobs opportunities for young people.

V. Health

33. Health care and access to health information and services are central to ensuring youth development. A number of Member States are implementing specific youth-focused health-care programmes and services (Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Honduras, Italy, Malawi, Peru, Swaziland, Switzerland, United States of America), including on health promotion and education; nutrition, eating disorders and obesity; the effects of non-communicable and communicable diseases; sexual and reproductive health including HIV and AIDS; substance abuse; physical fitness; mental health; early pregnancies, maternal and child health; and accessibility of health-care services for youth with disabilities.

34. The elimination of barriers hindering young people's access to health care was noted as of importance by Peru, Finland and the United States of America, while the active participation of young people in helping to define health priorities and health-care responses is a priority in Cambodia and Italy. In addition, sharing of good practice and research among Member States, for example through the Adolescent and Young Adult Health Research Network (the United States), forms a central part of the health response.

Health education and literacy

35. Ensuring the provision of health education and literacy forms an integral aspect of the health-care responses of many governments, through incorporation into school curricula (Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, Swaziland, United States of America, Zambia), including on sexual and reproductive health (Finland, Malawi, Switzerland), provision of community-based health-care centres (Democratic Republic of the Congo, United States of America), public campaigns and increased access to affordable, safe, effective and sustainable health-care services to youth (Cambodia, Finland, Swaziland).

Sexual and reproductive health, including on HIV and AIDS service provision

36. In Malawi, sports and recreational activities are used as a tool to help to engage and educate young people about the risk of HIV infection, while ensuring that service provision for young people living with HIV and AIDS is central to the health policy of both Cambodia and Costa Rica.

37. A number of United Nations entities are carrying out trainings, events and programmes related to sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS, including FAO, ESCAP, UNFPA, ECLAC, UN-Women, UNEP, UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO, looking at issues such as the legal and policy barriers to young people's access to health services and the importance of engaging youth at all stages of programme and policy development.

38. In Eastern and Southern Africa, UNFPA is supporting the assessment of quality and coverage of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Eastern African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) through the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Africa Regional Office, to inform the development of regional standards and guidelines. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the subject of adolescent pregnancy is of special concern with adolescent fertility rates remaining at high levels. In response, ECLAC published a report [5] examining persistent gaps in adolescent pregnancy between women by socioeconomic status, place of residence and ethnicity. In the Arab States region, UN-Women organized a joint consultation with the participation of top representatives from the League of Arab States, the Government of Algeria, key parliamentarians, religious leadership, national AIDS programmes, and other key stakeholders, including young women leaders, to generate political will for implementation of the Arab AIDS strategy and address the AIDS epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa region.

[5] "Reproduction in adolescence and its inequalities in Latin America: introduction to demographic analysis, with an emphasis on the use of census microdata from the 2010 round of censuses" (2014).

Youth mental health

39. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs released its report entitled "Mental Health Matters: Social inclusion of youth with mental health conditions" (ST/ESA/352) and utilized momentum around the report to commemorate International Youth Day 2014 under the theme "Mental Health Matters", for which the Department and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth organized a global campaign and event in drawing attention to the issue of eliminating stigma surrounding young people with mental health conditions.

VI. Violence and conflict

Addressing all forms of violence

40. Legislative reforms have been undertaken in many countries to prohibit violence in all its forms, and have been accompanied by capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts. These measures have led to a decrease in the acceptance of the use of violence, and a greater tendency to report incidents of violence. Specific measures to strengthen or establish programmes and policies to address all forms of violence have been established (Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Switzerland, United States of America), including on trafficking in persons and the commercial sexual exploitation of children, bullying and cyberbullying, violence in the media, the involvement and manipulation of youth in criminal activities, as well as to develop safe and youth-friendly counselling and substance abuse prevention programmes. Efforts to eliminate gender-based violence, such as through Finland's National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women, have been undertaken by a number of Member States (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peru).

41. United Nations entities are bolstering the efforts of Member States to prevent all forms of violence. UN-Women works with governments to inform the political and policy processes to introduce and/or implement legislation protecting the rights of women and girls. ECLAC initiated a development account project on social inclusion of youth in contexts of increasing violence and insecurity, with a focus on Central America, while the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children has supported the efforts of countries which have adopted national time-bound agendas to address all forms of violence against children and youth, such as in the Dominican Republic.

42. The United States has implemented measures towards prevention of bullying, including through training, toolkits and educational campaigns. While in response to increasing concerns about cyberbullying, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children published a report entitled "Releasing Children's Potential and Minimizing Risks — ICTs, the Internet and Violence against Children", which was informed by an expert consultation co-hosted with Costa Rica and built upon consultations held with children and adolescents. Moreover, at its sixty-ninth session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on protecting children from bullying (resolution 69/158).

Juvenile justice

43. A number of Member States have identified working on juvenile justice issues as a priority, supporting reform and programmes aimed at preventing young people from coming into conflict with the law as well as ensuring requisite support, facilities and rehabilitation of those already in the juvenile justice system (Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Peru, United States of America). In January 2015, the Government of Switzerland, together with the Terre des Hommes Foundation, organized the World Congress on Juvenile Justice, while in December 2014 the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (resolution 69/194, annex).

44. The development of safe and youth-friendly counselling and substance abuse prevention programmes is integral to preventing substance abuse in young people as well as supporting those who are managing substance abuse issues. Initiatives include the use of campaigns (United States of America) and vocational skills and counselling programmes (UN-Habitat)

Youth in armed conflict, including young people affected or exploited by terrorism and incitement

45. In order to address the issue of young people affected by terrorism and incitement, in April 2015, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in its presidency of the Security Council, initiated a Security Council ministerial open debate on the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace. Further to the debate, Jordan organized the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security (August 2015), with the support of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, UNFPA, UNDP, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPBSO), the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and two civil society organizations, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and the Search for Common Ground. The Government of Finland has implemented its first national action plan for the prevention of violent extremism where youth are identified as a vulnerable group, while in 2015 national guidelines for child protection services were updated to include violent extremism, specifically cases where a minor is suspected of attempting to travel or be taken to a conflict area with extremist motives.

46. In Colombia, a policy on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children and adolescents by organized armed and criminal groups seeks to provide young people with opportunities for engagement and development through its Golombiao programme, and has also launched a national diploma on peacebuilding for young people together with UNICEF and UNFPA. Supporting the efforts of Member States, United Nations entities, donors, national and international non-governmental organizations and civil society, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development's Working Group on Participation of Young People in Peacebuilding launched a set of Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding in 2014, providing guidance on meaningful youth engagement and participation, especially in conflict or transition settings. The Guiding Principles have been launched in 8 countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Yemen) and endorsed by the Commonwealth's African and Caribbean Ministers of Youth. A practice note on young people's participation in peacebuilding is currently under development,

aimed at informing policymakers and donors of key strategic and programming considerations for supporting young people's participation in peacebuilding. UN-Habitat, UNDP, ILO and FAO are working to implement a youth and livelihoods programme in Somalia, targeting youth affected by armed conflict; while in 2014 UN-Women provided intergovernmental support to the Government of Nigeria for the recovery of young girls abducted by Boko Haram.

VII. Discrimination and gender equality

Social inclusion of youth

47. Poverty and lack of employment are deemed key contributors to social exclusion and lack of opportunity (Finland, Italy, Switzerland), with young people often facing discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, access to credit, health care, service provision and education. As such, ensuring equal opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged youth is a priority in the national action plans of a number of Member States, including in the Government programme of Finland 2011-2015 and the National Programme for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty of Switzerland, where a specific focus on providing training and education, as well as access to basic services and the labour market, were noted as important in ensuring social inclusion, particularly for migrant youth.

Indigenous and minority youth

48. Ensuring the inclusion and protection of the rights of indigenous youth was deemed a priority by Costa Rica, Finland, Peru and the United States of America. Finland has undertaken programmes to keep indigenous languages alive and provide support to indigenous youth structures, while Peru works to strengthen the capacity of rural and indigenous youth in their local social and political spaces, through entrepreneurship and training schemes. Costa Rica works through sports-based initiatives to ensure inclusion of indigenous and minority youth, and the United States launched Generation Indigenous, an initiative which aims to improve opportunities for native American youth.

49. In order to protect the rights of minority youth, Finland provides structural and financial support to Roma community and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth structures and activities as part of the government child and youth policy programme, while the inclusion of youth with disabilities is the subject of a number of schemes in Costa Rica and in the United States, aimed at enabling labour market access of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

50. In partnership with the Global Policy Initiative of Columbia University, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth organized a two-day expert group meeting on the marginalization and inequalities facing youth (March 2014), bringing together academics, practitioners, civil society and youth activists to discuss the issue of youth marginalization.

Addressing the challenges faced by girls and young women

51. The promotion of gender equality and the implementation of actions to address the challenges faced by girls and young women is a priority for a number of Member States (Cambodia, Finland, Honduras). Issues of specific concern included

the prevention of early marriage of girls and young women and the ending of female genital mutilation. Under the guise of an African Union "End Child Marriage in Africa" campaign (2014), a number of Member States are launching or will launch their own national campaigns (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia), while the UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office is supporting efforts in the region to implement legislation to eradicate child marriage and protect children already in marriages. Finland is implementing its action plan for the prevention of the circumcision of girls and young women, while in the United Republic of Tanzania a community-based approach aimed at increasing awareness of the need to prevent/fight against female genital mutilation, to provide reproductive health services and to demand justice and support for alternative rites of passage for adolescent girls is under way.

52. A number of United Nations entities pointed to internal strategies to ensure gender equality within their structures and activities (UN-Habitat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECLAC, UN-Women, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth). UN-Women has launched various flagship campaigns such as the UNiTE and HeForShe campaigns to address the multitude of challenges being faced by girls and young women across the world. ITU works to draw attention to the empowerment of girls and young women through ICT via a women's digital literacy campaign. United Nations entities have carried out specific programmes and/or research on gender equality and the rights of girls and young women (ECLAC, UN-Women), as well as work to increase the capacities of girls and young women and their participation in political spheres and decision-making processes (UN-Women).

VIII. Participation

53. In recognition of the central role youth participation plays in youth development, Member States and United Nations entities have increased efforts to establish mechanisms and processes enabling youth engagement in decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.

Involvement of youth and youth-led organizations in decision-making

54. Member States stressed the importance of ensuring the active involvement of youth in decision-making and policy development at all levels (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Switzerland, Togo), and highlighted various consultations and events they carry out with young people and youth-led organizations to help inform their work, policies and decision-making processes (Bahrain, China, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, Switzerland, Togo). Creating enabling environments and providing support to youth structures and national youth councils was highlighted as a means of supporting sustainable youth participation (Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Italy, Malawi, Switzerland, Togo, United States of America).

55. In order to better foster the participation of youth in institutional structures, a number of countries have instigated municipal, regional or national participation mechanisms, such as youth parliaments or advisory bodies, which contribute to the

activities of the national government (Colombia, Honduras, Italy, Malawi, Peru, Switzerland).

Youth delegate participation

56. A number of Member States included youth delegates as part of their delegations to United Nations intergovernmental meetings (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Dominican Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Kenya, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United States of America) with Azerbaijan and Ireland launching Youth Delegates programmes in 2015. In addition, a number of countries sent youth representatives to attend the World Youth Conference (Sri Lanka, 2014), the Global Forum on Youth Policies (Azerbaijan, 2014), the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum (United Nations Headquarters, 2014 and 2015), the IV Youth Forum of the Americas (Panama, 2015), and the Young ICT Policy Leaders Programme at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-14) (Republic of Korea, 2014).

57. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs works to support the participation of the United Nations youth delegates during the meetings of the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development through the organization of activities, and training and information-sharing, while the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, the European Youth Forum, and the Major Group for Children and Youth all work via trainings, information-sharing and outreach to help to coordinate the work of youth delegates to the United Nations processes and meetings, including the High-level Political Forum, the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development.

Youth participation in the work of the United Nations

58. United Nations entities are increasing their efforts to promote the active involvement of youth and youth-led organizations in their own activities and processes. Both FAO and UNDP have developed entity-specific youth strategies, while the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth undertakes outreach and awareness-raising on youth issues with young people through participation in events and campaigns. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development builds stronger partnerships between youth and the normative work of the United Nations system by involving young people as part of its thematic working groups.

59. Ensuring youth involvement via advisory boards and platforms to United Nations entities is central to mainstreaming youth participation in the work of the United Nations. UNEP involves young people in the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and facilitates the involvement of the Major Group for Children and Youth in the work of the UNEP governing organs, while UN-Habitat's Youth Advisory Board advises UN-Habitat on all its programmes.

60. United Nations entities also involve young people in the design and elaboration of specific activities and initiatives, such as in the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations annual summer school and its Annual Youth Forum, and the FAO Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA). The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNESCO and UN-Habitat, held an expert group meeting on youth civic engagement in 2014, discussing the

political, social and economic participation of youth at all levels, bringing together experts from academia, the private sector, United Nations entities and youth civil society. In 2015, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with the support of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, led the Youth Now campaign, aimed at drawing attention and increasing efforts to accelerate implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary.

61. Youth-led organizations and structures (the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, the Major Group for Children and Youth, the European Youth Forum) expressed a need to strengthen mechanisms for youth participation within the United nations system, so as to better incorporate the voices of youth in decision-making.

Youth participation in activities related to post-2015

62. United Nations entities have been supporting work and efforts to ensure young people's active involvement in policy- and decision-making at the local and national levels pertaining to the post-2015 development agenda. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs actively promotes the systematic involvement of youth and youth-led organizations in the normative and intergovernmental work of the United Nations related to sustainable development follow-up and the post-2015 process, including the Open Working Group, through the "Major groups and other stakeholders" format. The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, ITU, UNFPA and the United Nations Millennium Campaign (UNMC), with the support of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the Major Group for Children and Youth and the International Coordination Meeting for Youth Organizations, launched the Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (GPY2015) and facilitated youth, youth-led and youth-focused organizations' advocacy efforts for youth issues in the post-2015 development agenda/sustainable development goals framework, including the Global Youth Call: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

63. In the Eastern and Southern Africa region, UNFPA has supported a number of mechanisms which strengthen youth participation with the aim of positioning youth within the post-2015 development agenda, while UNFPA country offices in the region have supported the efforts of a number of Member States in organizing large-scale consultations with youth on the development of national youth policies, support to national youth council development, and consultations on priorities of the post-2015 development agenda (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

64. In order to promote youth participation in the Latin American and Caribbean region, ECLAC, in conjunction with the members of the Latin American and Caribbean Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth, organized a regional youth forum in Ecuador (2014), providing a space for dialogue between young people interested in the post-2015 development agenda and representatives from national and international entities, as well as civil society, resulting in the approval by governments of the Ibero-American region of a three-year-long regional programme on youth participation and empowerment.

65. United Nations entities have been actively supporting the participation of youth representatives in global, regional and national consultations, including

support to the United Nations youth delegates to the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development; the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum 2014 and 2015; regional Economic and Social Council youth forums in the Arab States and in Latin America; the Commission on the Status of Women and the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Youth Forum; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Forum; the ASEAN People's Forum and the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Agenda; conferences of parties for multilateral environmental agreements and regional conferences of environment ministers; and the High-level Event of the President of the General Assembly on (a) the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth and (b) demographic dividend and youth employment.

66. The Major Group for Children and Youth has been actively involved in a number of United Nations-led processes, including a contribution to the High-level Political Forum and the follow-up and review section of the post-2015 development agenda, and capacity-building in United Nations processes, such as through the organization of trainings at Youth Blasts and Youth Forums with a focus on implementation of the sustainable development goals.

United Nations entities supporting youth participation at the country level

67. UNDP has supported a series of initiatives at the country level aimed at furthering the involvement of youth in decision-making, including through: youth involvement in the constitutional reform process (Tunisia); tackling youth unemployment through games (Republic of Moldova); technology (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); repurposing vacant public spaces (Montenegro); collating narratives from thousands of young people in search for solutions (Kyrgyzstan), and competition (Albania); coming up with fresh ideas regarding education reform (Republic of Moldova); climate change (Armenia); combating corruption (Montenegro); recycling (Belarus); designing real-time feedback loops with local authorities to ensure that citizens' voices influence decision-making (Armenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); support to the African Union's African Governance Architecture (AGA) National Youth Consultation in September 2014; support to the re-establishment of the Fiji National Youth Council; engaging youth through ICT (Kosovo); national youth anti-corruption campaign (Thailand); youth voices in post-2015 (Bangladesh); strengthening the democracy programme (Cambodia); youth empowerment through civic education (Mongolia); African-wide Regional Youth Integrity Camp, in collaboration with the Government of Kenya; support to young parliamentarians; and a United Nations joint programme (ILO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF) in China working with local youth organizations to train young volunteers in providing community social services to persons with disabilities.

68. UN-Women has been working on building the capacities of local youth as well as providing technical assistance to partner governments to ensure increased involvement of youth and youth-led organizations in national decision-making processes, through: the establishment of mentorship programmes (Brazil, Rwanda); support to the establishment of youth and women's councils (Rwanda); technical support to local advocacy movements in the approval of a youth statute (Brazil); the development of gender-inclusive youth groups' registration protocols and guidelines (Papua New Guinea); and capacity-building for stakeholders on youth participation

in electoral processes (United Republic of Tanzania). Meanwhile, UN-Habitat engages young people in the development of national urban policies (Rwanda); in public space planning (Bangladesh, Haiti, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Somalia); in urban planning training (Kenya); and through a joint action research project (Brazil, Kenya, Nepal, Yemen, Zimbabwe).

Youth participation through volunteerism

69. Youth participation through voluntary activities was recognized (Costa Rica, Peru, Togo, United States of America) as an important means of participation. The United Nations Volunteers programme has launched a global youth volunteer programme that provides young people under the age of 29 years the opportunity to contribute to sustainable development through voluntary activities at the local, national and global levels. At the same time, UNV has worked with United Nations entities at the country level to help to disseminate information on laws and policies on youth volunteerism, training, capacity-building and advocacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda and Viet Nam. In collaboration with UNESCO, the Global Peace Foundation and the Global Young Leaders Academy, ESCAP convened the Asia-Pacific Conference on Youth Volunteerism to Promote Participation, Development and Peace (2014). ESCAP also brought together 100 young people from Thailand who participated in the National Training on Youth Volunteerism and Empowerment (2015).

IX. Intergenerational relations

Voluntary, constructive and regular interaction between young people and older generations in the family, the workplace and society at large

70. Programmes to promote intergenerational dialogue and relations were undertaken by a number of Member States, including Cambodia, which worked with UNV to establish a multimechanism to promote opportunities for voluntary, constructive and regular interaction between young people and older generations in the family, the workplace and society at large. Colombia meanwhile carried out a programme called Young People Ask, which brought together young people and government officials and business leaders in dialogue. In Honduras, the *Plataforma de Gestión Vida Mejor* (*Better Life Management Platform*) strategy promotes interaction in the family between younger and older persons in rural areas via its National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition, where young people in targeted households can benefit from interventions including: (a) home gardens (orchard per household); (b) school feeding; (c) school and orchards; and (d) community gardens.

71. United Nations entities noted the importance of working to strengthen intergenerational partnerships, particularly in the light of the ageing of societies in many regions, and have carried out expert group meetings and released publications to bolster efforts on this front (ECLAC, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCAP, UN-Women, UNEP). UN-Habitat works to enhance positive intergenerational dynamics through the meaningful engagement of youth in decision-making and implementation of slum-upgrading initiatives, while UN-Women has introduced various mentoring programmes in member countries to provide youth, particularly women, opportunities for developing leadership skills

and increasing their representation within the political spheres, including in Brazil, West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Asia and the Pacific.

72. The Secretary-General's 2013 report on intergenerational solidarity and the needs of future generations (A/68/322) included a tally of mechanisms and institutions around the world that are designed to promote the interests of future generations.

X. Recommendations

73. Keeping in mind the inputs received from Member States, United Nations entities and civil society youth-led organizations, the following actions are recommended:

(a) **Ensure the participation of young people and their organizations in inclusive and representative decision-making processes at all levels, including national and regional youth councils;**

(b) **Develop, implement and monitor national policies and programmes in support of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the sustainable development goals that account for the diversity and the diverse needs of young people;**

(c) **Enhance exchange of experience, knowledge and expertise in youth policy and coordination between and among governments, youth-led organizations and structures, the private sector and United Nations entities, at the local, national and international levels.**